

## HISTORY OF HORIZONTAL CULTURE.

We regret to state that we have not been able by a careful research of all the Agricultural works that we have been able to examine, in the English and French languages, to find the origin of this system of culture.

Mr. Thomas Jefferson, who was a close observer of improvements in Agriculture, in a letter dated "Monticello, 6th March, 1816," says, "My son-in-law, Colonel Thomas M. Randolph, is, perhaps, the best farmer in the State; and by the introduction of the Horizontal method of Plowing, instead of straight furrows, has really saved this hilly country. It was running off in the valleys with every rain, but by this process we scarcely lose an ounce of soil.

"A rafter level traces a horizontal line around the curve of the hill or valley, at distances of thirty or forty yards, which is followed by the plow; and by these guide-lines the plowman finishes the interval by his eyes, throwing the earth into beds of six feet wide, with large water furrows between them. When more rain falls than can be instantly absorbed, the horizontal furrows retain the surplus until it is all soaked up, scarcely a drop ever reaching the valley below.

"Mr. Randolph has contrived also, for our steepest hill-sides, a simple plan which throws the furrows always down hill. It is made with two wings welded to the same bar, with their planes at a right angle to each other. The point and the heel of the bar are formed into pivots, and the bar becomes an axis, by turning which, either wing may be laid on the ground, and the other then standing vertically, acts as a mould-board. The right angle between them, however, is filled with a sloping piece of wood, leaving only a cutting margin of each wing naked, and aiding in the office of raising the sod gradually, while the declivity of the hill facilitates its falling over. The change of the position of the share at the end of each furrow is effected in a moment by withdrawing and replacing a pin."

It seems Colonel Randolph introduced this method of plowing into Virginia, previous to 1816, as Mr. Jefferson states, he was acquainted with it two or three years previous to writing this letter.

This is the earliest notice that we have seen of the use of the horizontal culture, as practiced in the South at the present day. It would be gratifying to know from whence he introduced it, and where it originated.

In "Taylor's Arator," published in Virginia the beginning of this century, on the subject of plowing hilly lands, it is stated "that such lands will admit of narrow ridges, as well as level, by a degree of skill and attention so easily attainable, that it has existed in Scotland above a century past under a state of agriculture otherwise execrable, and among the igno-